Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:

1. (currently amended) An apparatus enabling synchronization of network traffic with at least one network device, comprising

a first network interface for communication with a first network device;

a second network interface for communication with a second network device;

at least a third network interface for exchange of synchronization packets with a partner network device;

a control module operative to

receive data packets on the first <u>network interface;</u>

<u>receive data packets on the</u> and second network <u>interface</u> interfaces, wherein the data packets <u>received on the first and second network interfaces</u> are addressed to destination hosts;

receive synchronization packets on the at least a third network interface <u>from the partner network device;</u>

transmit, on the at least a third network interface, the data packets received on the first network interface as synchronization packets to the partner network device;

transmit, on the at least a third network interface, the data packets received on the second network interface as synchronization packets to the partner network device;

process the received data packets and the synchronization packets<u>;</u>

<u>forward the data packets received on the first network interface from the second network interface; and</u>

<u>forward the data packets received on the second network interface from the</u>

first network interface.

2. (currently amended) The apparatus of claim 1 wherein the control module is further operative to discard the received synchronization packets before transmitting the data packets to the destination hosts.

3. (original) The apparatus of claim 1 further comprising a fourth network interface for exchange of synchronization packets with the partner network device; and wherein the control module is operative to

transmit, on the third network interface, the data packets received on the first network interface as synchronization packets to the partner network device;

transmit, on the fourth network interface, the data packets received on the second network interface as synchronization packets to the partner network device.

4. (currently amended) The apparatus of claim 1 wherein the control module is further operative to

encapsulate the data packets received on the first and second network interfaces with synchronization headers before transmitting the data packets on the at least a third network interface, and

decapsulate the synchronization packets received from the partner network device on the at least a third network interface network interface.

5. (original) The apparatus of claim 4 wherein the control module is further operative to include meta information relating to the data packets in the synchronization header.

6. (original) The apparatus of claim 1 wherein the first network interface is a wired network interface.

7. (original) The apparatus of claim 1 wherein the first network interface is a wireless network interface.

8. (original) The apparatus of claim 1 wherein the at least a third network interface is a wireless network interface.

9. (original) The apparatus of claim 3 wherein the fourth network interface is a wireless network interface.

10. (original) The apparatus of claim 1 wherein the control module is further operative to verify the packets received on the at least a third network interface.

11. (original) The apparatus of claim 10 wherein the synchronization packets include a magic identifier, and wherein the control module is operative to verify the packets received on the at least a third network interface by validating the magic identifier.

12. (original) The apparatus of claim 10 wherein the control module is further operative to include magic identifiers to synchronization packets transmitted on the at least a third network interface.

13. (original) The apparatus of claim 1 wherein the control module is further operative to compose summary versions of the packets received on the first and second network

interfaces and transmit the summary versions as synchronization packets on the at least a third network interface.

14. (original) The apparatus of claim 13 wherein the summary versions each comprise a packet header and a payload size.

15. (currently amended) A method directed to synchronization of network traffic with at least one partner network device, comprising

receiving data packets on first and second network interfaces, wherein the data packets are addressed to destination hosts;

receiving synchronization packets on at least a third network interface from at least one partner network device;

transmitting, on the at least a third network interface, the data packets received on the first network interface as synchronization packets to at least one partner network device;

transmitting, on the at least a third network interface, the data packets received on the second network interface as synchronization packets to the at least one partner network device;

processing the received data packets and the received synchronization packets; and

discarding the received synchronization packets after processing; before transmitting the data packets to the destination hosts

forwarding the data packets received on the first network interface from the second network interface; and

forwarding the data packets received on the second network interface from the first network interface.

16. (currently amended) A system, comprising

a first network device operably connected to a first communication path in a computer network,
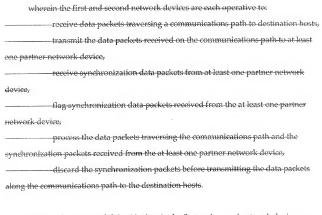
a second network device operably connected to a second communication path in the computer network,

wherein the first network device is operably connected to the second network device to transmit and receive synchronization packets,

wherein the first and second network devices each comprise

a first network interface;

a second network interface;

a control module operative to

receive data packets on the first and second network interfaces, wherein the data packets are addressed to destination hosts;

receive synchronization packets from a partner network device;

transmit the data packets received on the first network interface as synchronization packets to the partner network device;

transmit the data packets received on the second network interface as synchronization packets to the partner network device;

process the received data packets and the received synchronization packets;

discard the received synchronization packets;

forward the data packets received on the first network interface from the second network interface; and

forward the data packets received on the second network interface from the first network interface

wherein the first and second network devices are each operative to:

receive data packets traversing a communications path to destination hosts,

transmit the data packets received on the communications path to at least one partner network device,

receive synchronization data packets from at least one partner network device,

flag synchronization data packets received from the at least one partner network device,

process the data packets traversing the communications path and the synchronization packets received from the at least one partner network device,

discard the synchronization packets before transmitting the data packets along the communications path to the destination hosts.

17. (original) The system of claim 16 wherein the first and second network devices are each further operative to

encapsulate the data packets received on the communications path with synchronization headers before transmitting the data packets to the at least one partner network device, and

decapsulate the synchronization packets received from the at least one partner network device.

18. (original) The system of claim 17 wherein the first and second network devices are each further operative to

include meta information relating to the data packets in the synchronization header.

19. (currently amended) The system of claim 16 wherein the first and second network devices each comprise

~~a first network interface for communication with a first computer network;~~

~~a second network interface for communication with a second computer network;~~

at least a third network interface for exchange of synchronization packets with [[a]] the partner network device~~;~~

~~a control module operative to~~

~~receive data packets on the first and second network interfaces, wherein the data packets are addressed to destination hosts;~~

~~receive synchronization packets on the at least a third network interface;~~

~~transmit, on the at least a third network interface, the data packets received on the first network interface as synchronization packets to the partner network device;~~

~~transmit, on the at least a third network interface, the data packets received on the second network interface as synchronization packets to the partner network device;~~

~~process the received data packets and the synchronization packets; and~~

~~discard the synchronization packets before transmitting the data packets to the destination hosts.~~

20. (original) The system of claim 19 wherein the first and second network devices further comprise a fourth network interface for exchange of synchronization packets with the partner network device; and wherein the control module is operative to

transmit, on the third network interface, the data packets received on the first network interface as synchronization packets to the partner network device;

transmit, on the fourth network interface, the data packets received on the second network interface as synchronization packets to the partner network device.

21. (original) The system of claim 19 wherein the control module is further operative to
encapsulate the data packets received on the first and second network interfaces
with synchronization headers before transmitting the data packets on the at least a third
network interface, and
decapsulate the synchronization packets received on the at least a third network
interface network interface.

22. (original) The system of claim 21 wherein the control module is further operative to
include meta information relating to the data packets in the synchronization header.

23. (original) The system of claim 19 wherein the first network interface is a wired
network interface.

24. (original) The system of claim 19 wherein the first network interface is a wireless
network interface.

25. (original) The system of claim 19 wherein the at least a third network interface is a
wireless network interface.

26. (original) The system of claim 20 wherein the fourth network interface is a wireless
network interface.

27. (currently amended) A bandwidth management device operative to synchronize
network traffic data with at least one other bandwidth management device comprising

a first network interface for communication with a first computer network;

a second network interface for communication with a second computer network;

at least a third network interface for exchange of synchronization packets with at least one partner bandwidth management device;

a bandwidth management module operative to

receive data packets on the first and second network interfaces, wherein the data packets are addressed to destination hosts;

receive synchronization packets on the at least a third network interface;

transmit, on the at least a third network interface, the data packets received on the first network interface as synchronization packets to the partner network device;

transmit, on the at least a third network interface, the data packets received on the second network interface as synchronization packets to the partner network device;

process the received data packets and the synchronization packets;

enforce bandwidth utilization controls on the data packets received at the first and second network interfaces; ~~and~~

discard the <u>received</u> synchronization packets <u>after processing</u> ~~before transmitting the data packets to the destination hosts~~;

<u>forward the data packets received on the first network interface from the second network interface; and</u>

<u>forward the data packets received on the second network interface from the first network interface.</u>

28. (original) The bandwidth management device of claim 27 wherein processing of the synchronization packets influences enforcement of the bandwidth utilization controls on the data packets received at the first and second network interfaces.

29. (original) The bandwidth management device of claim 27 further comprising a fourth network interface for exchange of synchronization packets with the partner network device; and wherein the control module is operative to

transmit, on the third network interface, the data packets received on the first network interface as synchronization packets to the partner network device;

transmit, on the fourth network interface, the data packets received on the second network interface as synchronization packets to the partner network device.

30. (original) The bandwidth management device of claim 27 wherein the control module is further operative to

encapsulate the data packets received on the first and second network interfaces with synchronization headers before transmitting the data packets on the at least a third network interface, and

decapsulate the synchronization packets received on the at least a third network interface network interface.

31. (original) The bandwidth management device of claim 30 wherein the control module is further operative to

include meta information relating to the data packets in the synchronization header.

32. (original) The bandwidth management device of claim 27 wherein the first network interface is a wired network interface.

33. (original) The bandwidth management device of claim 27 wherein the first network

interface is a wireless network interface.

34. (original) The bandwidth management device of claim 27 wherein the at least a third network interface is a wireless network interface.

35. (original) The bandwidth management device of claim 29 wherein the fourth network interface is a wireless network interface.

36. (currently amended) An apparatus enabling synchronization of network traffic with at least one network device, comprising

at least a first network interface for communication with a first network device;

a second network interface;

at least one synchronization interface for exchange of synchronization packets with a partner network device;

a control module operative to

receive data packets on the at least a first and second network interfaces interface, wherein the data packets are addressed to destination hosts;

receive synchronization packets on the at least one synchronization interface;

transmit, on the at least one synchronization interface, the data packets received on the at least a first and second network interfaces interface as synchronization packets to the partner network device;

process the received data packets and the synchronization packets;

discard the received synchronization packets after processing;

forward the data packets received on the first network interface from the second network interface; and

forward the data packets received on the second network interface from the first network interface.